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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ER](#) [DJ](#) [SO](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: ISAIAS HOLDS A GRUDGE

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) WHY ERITREA IS BEING SO STUBBORN: In mid-April, just as the tension on the Eritrea-Djibouti border was first rising, President Isaias telephoned President Guelleh and suggested that the two of them work together to resolve the issue, according to Yemane Ghebreab, the Eritrean ruling party's political director. Guelleh agreed, but the next day he supposedly issued some pronouncement slating the Eritreans for encroaching on Ras Doumeira. Isaias was furious with what he saw as Guelleh's two-faced behavior, and went into his famously mulish mode.

¶2. (C) ETHIOPIA "DUPING" DJIBOUTI: In a frank 90 minute exchange with the ambassador on June 12, Yemane repeated the line that Eritrea has no claims on Djiboutian territory, has no fundamental problem with Djibouti, and "will not be provoked into something larger." When pressed, he explained the Eritrean perspective that Ethiopia has duped Djibouti into creating another border dispute to foster Ethiopian interests in the region. The ambassador replied that if this was the Eritrean view, then they'd already failed, as it looked like they had risen to the alleged "provocation." The ambassador reiterated the USG call for an end to Eritrea's aggressive behavior on the border, a cease-fire, a return to the status quo ante, and a dispute resolution process.

¶3. (C) REGIONAL REVIEW: Yemane also shared his views on other regional developments, including:

-- Eritrea had given up on the Darfuri factions and looked to Khartoum to initiate a resolution to the Darfur mess;

-- Eritrea backed a SPLM-NCP "partnership" for the Sudanese 2009 elections;

-- The Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia split had delayed a peaceful resolution to Somalia's woes; Yemane blamed Sheikh Sharif for not working to gain consensus within the ARS first;

-- Yemane opined that the June 9 Somalia reconciliation agreement was "unimplementable;" and,

-- He verified that Sudan had agreed to provide much needed diesel and other fuels, but cautioned "it's agreed to, but not delivered yet."

MCMULLEN